M I N U T E S

of the

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

re Unification of Braille Music Notation Symbols

held April 22nd to 29th, 1929

Under the auspices of the American Braille Press

74, Rue Lauriston, Paris

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PRESIDENT

M. Georges L. Raverat, Secretary-General of the American Braille Press, Inc., Paris.

DELEGATES

France — M. Maurice Blazy, Professor delegated by the Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles, Paris.

" — M. Remy Clavers, Professor delegated by Association Valentin Hauy pour le Bien des Aveugles, Paris.

" — M. Paul Dupas, of the American Braille Press, Paris.

Germany — Herr A. Reuss, Director of the Braille Printing establishment at Schwetzingen (Baden).

" — Herr Fritz Czychy, Professor of the Blind Institute at Konigsberg.

Italy — Lieutenant Nicolodi (war blinded), President of the "Union Nationale Italienne des Aveugles", Rome

" — Signor Fornasa, music teacher, Vicenza.

U.S.A. — Mr. Louis W. Rodenberg, of the Illinois School for the Blind, Jacksonville, Illinois, delegated by the American Foundation for the Blind, New York.

Great Britain — Mr. Edward Watson, Secretary Music Department) National Institute for the Blind London

" — Mr. P. T. Mayhew, Superintendent of Braille Music Transcription.)

The Braille dots are numbered thus throughout these Minutes:-

Monday, April 22nd, 1929, (1st day)
Morning Session 9:30 - 12 noon.

The Congress opened Monday morning at 9:30; all delegates being present except Lieutenant Nicolodi, who arrived about II AM.

Mr. Raverat, as President, welcomed the delegates in the name of the American Braille Press, and briefly explained the raison d'etre of the Congress. He then read a cablegram from Mr. William Nelson Cromwell, the President of the American Braille Press, regretting his inability to greet them in person, but assuring them of his profound sympathy with their object, viz;- the attempt to come to an agreement which should establish, if possible, uniformity as regards the symbols used internationally, the effect of which would be to bestow untold blessings on the blind, and all who worked for them, throughout the world.

Mr. Raverat expressed his confidence that, as we had met in a mutual desire to assist each other in arriving at an amicable understanding, that the conference would be successful, and if and where we failed to concur, the difficulty might be met by making memoranda explaining any points of difference in the various countries. By this means, he thought we should be able to avoid any deadlock and reduce any debateable points to a minimum.

The various delegates, each on behalf of the institution he represented, thanked Mr. Raverat for his welcome and the hospitality accorded by the American Braille Press, and it was remarked

that it was owing to the organization work of Mr. Raverat that the present Congress, with all its happy possibilities, had become a fait accompli.

This was unanimously agreed upon.

Mr. Raverat then asked the delegates if they agreed to take the text prepared by the French Commission: Mr. Blazy, of the Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles, Mr. Clavers, of the Association Valentin Hauy and Mr. Dupas, of the American Braille Press, as a basis of discussion. This pamphlet was entitled:- "Notation Musicale Braille" and an embossed copy was handed by Mr. Raverat to each delegate, translated into his own language.

This was carried unanimously.

Afternoon Session. 2:30 - 6 PM

(Full attendance)

31 paragraphs were dealt with, some after lengthy discussion, one (Par. 13 re Incomplete bars) was referred for a later sitting. Par. 23 re Unison sign, the N.I.B. delegates reported they would have to refer to their own Revision Committee, though to them it did not seem to be a vital point, or one which should prejudice the unanimous decision of the Congress. Par. 30, (on Stem signs) caused a protracted discussion, as the Stem signs had to be considered in combination with the "Breaking up" and "Tremolo" signs, which all the English speaking delegates urged should be consistent, a point which was eventually recognized by all.

The afternoon session was closed at 6 PM, to enable the delegates to prepare and submit an amended text for certain paragraphs of the "Notation Musicale Braille" in readiness for the meeting next morning.

Tuesday, April 23, 1929 (2nd day)

Morning Session 9:30 - 12:15.

Full attendance, except Lieutenant Nicolodi (Rome).

Mr. Vodenberg, the American delegate, proposed that a wreath suitably inscribed be laid as an act of homage before the statue of Louis Braille, at his birthplace, by the delegates of the Congress and in recognition of the inestimable benefits accruing to the blind of every country in consequence of the invention, in 1829, of the Braille script system. The proposition was seconded by Mr. Mayhew, National Institute, London, and passed unanimously. Mr. Watson, National Institute for the Blind, London, remarking that in consequence of the coincidence of the centenary with the date of Congress, this was a singularly happy privilege.

Mr. Paverat and the French delegates graciously acknowledged the tribute so spontaneously offered to their distin-

Numbering of the six Braille dots

Mr. Paverat suggested that, to obviate confusion and to facilitate the work of the Congress, that the proposal of Mr. Vodenberg to use the Continental method of numbering the dots viz: 1 4 / 2 5 / 3 6 be adopted in place of the English & American 1 2 / 3 4 / 5 6

An additional argument in favour of this was that this would establish uniformity of reference internationally and also maintain the numbering as applied by Louis Braille himself.

Each delegate agreed to recommend this desirable uniformity to his respective home Committee, and arrangement which greatly gratified all the Continental delegates.

Paragraphs 32 to 42 were discussed at the morning session. All the paragraphs referring to "slurs" were singularly difficult because of diversity of practice, but by noon agreement was secured.

Afternoon session, April 23rd, 1929 - 2:30 - 6 P.M.

Same attendance as at morning session.

A review was made of the morning's discussions, and the various delegates were asked to prepare and submit amended texts on the debated points for the sake of clearer statement.

Paragraphs 43 to 64 were taken, and with certain minor reservations, it was agreed that footnotes to the general text should be added in order to make it clear where and what the deviations were.

The session closed at 6:15 in perfect cordiality.

Wednesday, April 24th, 1929 (3rd day)

Morning Session, 9:30 to noon.

Present - all the delegates except Lieut. Nicoladi (Rome).

Paragraphs 65 to 67 on "Repeats" were taken. The rules, as set out in the French "Notation Musicale Braille", formed the subject of much discussion, and were in some instances re-drafted with considerable extension of the text before they were unanimously adopted.

Afternoon Session, 2:45 to 6:00 P M.

Present - all the delegates.

The discussion of Par. 68, on Repetitions with Slurs, etc., took up the major portion of the time, and the text was ultimately remodelled. Mr. Dupas undertook to provide new examples and to [illegible] device, were ultimately passed, after slight rewording. Par. 73 on Nuances was entirely remodelled and Par. 74 re the International use of partial abbreviation confirmed.

Par. 75 on the Segno proved difficult, and after long discussion it was decided to adjourn its consideration till the following morning.

Mr. Podenberg stated that he considered the subject of Repeats would not be complete without an explanation in the text of a System of "Forward Repeats" used in America and Germany, and

and elucidated in the American "Key". Afterwards, Mr. Lupas, speaking for France, suggested that the explanation might be put in a special note - say as Par. 79.

Asked for an explanation of the English view, Mr. Mayhew said the National Institute, London, could not consent to its inclusion now, though he would not answer for the future. He thought, however, that it certainly might be explained in the present text.

At the request of Mr. Saverat, Mr. Rodenberg consented to draft a short synopsis of the explanatory text appearing in the American "Key", and the German delegates also agreed to prepare a short explanation of their own practice in this respect, both drafts to be considered by the Congress.

Thursday, April 25th, 1929, (48h day)

Morning session 9:15 to 12:15.

All delegates present except Lieut. Nicolodi (Rome).

The business began with Par. 75 (on the use of the Segno) which we were discussing at the close of Wednesday's session. A slightly altered wording satisfied the Congress.

Par. 76, on Double Bars. The wording of the paragraph was accepted, but the new signs suggested by the French, which had been rejected by the Congress, were replaced by the old signs.

Par. 78, Section on the printed Segno signs. It was agreed to transfer this (with new wording) to Par. 75.

Par. 79, on Arpeggi. This section was revised and passed and the four arpeggio signs suggested by the French were reduced to two.

Par. 80, on the Pause, and 81, on Commas, were passed.

Afternoon session, 2:40 to 6:00 PM.

All delegates except Italians present at beginning. Italian delegates came in later.

Par. 82, on Variantes passed after some discussion.

Par. 83, on Small notes took up much time, and Mr. Rodenberg and Mr. Mayhew were invited to supply a new text for consideration.

Paragraphs 84 and 85, on Pagination were (after some discussion) deleted as of minor importance and not worth the

time necessary for discussion.

The "Nota Bene" Section following Par. 85 was thus disposed of:-

Section (a) on the Breve. The sign 45-14 (for uniting two semi-breves to represent a breve) was rejected and the sign 56-3 was adopted.

It was agreed to transfer this (Section a) to the end of Par. 3 in Chapter 1.

Section (b) on Semibreves followed by two or more syncopated quavers. The sign 16-2 was changed to 126-2 according to a previous decision, and it was to be transferred to the end of Par. 14.

Paragraphs 86 to 89, on the "setting of the Musical text" were passed.

Par. 90, on Hand and Pedale signs. It was decided to include both sets of signs, viz:- old style and English- [illegible] was decided that each country had better employ its own abbreviations for the names of instruments, because of the differences in their names in the various countries.

In the middle of the afternoon session, a little time was allowed for the French delegates to confer with the American and English on the subject of the characteristics of their respective systems, viz:- I. Mr. Clavers' method (Remy Clavers, blind professor at L'Institution des Jeunes Aveugles, Paris).

2. Bar-over-Bar. 3. Bar-by-Bar. This opportunity of personal discussion between the interested parties was much appreciated, especially as they had never had opportunity of meeting and conferring on the different methods before this Congress brought them together.

After consultation with the delegates, Mr. Faverat announced that the American Braille Press would be pleased to print Czerny's (*) "Etudes de la Velocite" and Cramer's "Forty Daily Studies" in the various systems, and supply free copies for distribution, through the delegates, to the schools and teachers of the blind in the countries represented at the Congress. This was in order to obtain an expression of opinion after 12 months' trial as to the merits of each system.

This very generous offer was duly appreciated by all present, and an assurance was given to Mr. Faverat by the delegates

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(*) See further resolution at Saturday's Session, Page 13.

Friday, April 26th, 1929 (5th day)

Morning Session. 11:oo - 1:00 P.M.

Present all but the Italian delegates.

Mr. Maverat reported that Mr. Pierre Villey, Secretary-General of the Association Valentin Hauy, had suffered bereavement by the death of his mother. The Congress observed a moment of silence, all standing, as a mark of respect and sympathy.

The English delegates read the explanation of the Vertical Score and Bar-by-Bar system practised in England, and were asked to extend the same and give rules, etc.

Par. 92 - on passages with alternate hands. The French and German agreed to accept the hand and pedal signs as used in England, but the Germans wanted another use for alternation, viz:- 1-3 R.H.; 12-3 L.H.; 123-3 pedal; to be used only when there is an alternation of hands and of pedal parts within the same measure.

was agreed that throughout the whole book greater cross references or paragraphs be adopted.

At this point, Mr. Maverat announced that copies of "L'Illustration" - of Paris - dated 27th April had arrived. This journal contained an article describing the work and raison d'etre of the Congress, together with a photograph of the actual Congress in Session. Mr. Maverat was asked to accept the hearty thanks of the delegates for his kindness in arranging for this notice to appear and for the copies which he invited the delegates to accept.

It should also be recorded that Mr. Maverat invited all the delegates to accompany him that evening to a performance at "L'Opera-

Comique" of a representative French Opera, i.e. "Pelleas & Melisande", by Claude Debussy, a privilege which was gratefully accepted by all.

Par. 96, on Cadences, etc.- An addition to the text was required, duly framed and passed. At this point, there was a long discussion on Mr. Mayhew's suggestion of a sign indicating a blank space, such as was often left in Harmony Examination papers in England, i.e. the Examiners left out a section of the Harmony and required a candidate to fill it in again.

The sign 6-3 was accepted, but it was considered applicable principally in English Examination Text papers, and it was agreed that a footnote should be added on Par. 13 explaining the same and giving the sign.

Afternoon Session. 3:15 to 6:15 (Attendance same as at morning)

Par. 100, re Pianoforte Pedal. - It was thought that a clearer text might be compiled.
could cover all the cases and it was thought that the text might stand.

Pars. 102 to 114, on Mr. Remy Clavers' system, were not discussed as it was felt that it was necessary first for the delegates to have time to study the method. Mr. Dupas of the American Braille Press gave an explanation of the system to the American and English delegates, using a special edition of Bach's preludes and Fugues, set up in Braille for the purpose of illustration.

Par. 122, on Strings. The paragraph immediately after the signs for strings was remodelled.

Par.123, on Fingerings. It was decided to add the German

signs for the German indication of Fingering for the Violoncello.

The final paragraph was agreed to be reworded in the English translation for the sake of clearness, as follows:-

> "When a note is to be executed optionally, or in case
> "of chords played together on an open string and the
> "string immediately below, the fingering is marked
> "after the open string sign."

Saturday April 27th, 1929 (6th day)

Morning Session 9:30 to 12:30.

All delegates present.

Mr. Raverat announced that he had received a letter from Mr. Grosjean-Maupin, Director of l'Institution National des Jeunes Aveugles, Paris, acknowledging in grateful terms the proposition of the Congress to visit the birthplace of Louis Braille in order to place on the statue of that great benefactor of the blind a laurel wreath, suitably inscribed, as an act of international homage, rendered

tribute should be of a permanent nature, viz;- a palm; designed in bronze, and inscribed, in the French language for preference, as a special mark or respect to that country which had the honour to give birth to so illustrious a citizen, one whose genius had, under God, solved the problem of the intellectual emancipation of the blind of every land.

It was further resolved that this ceremony should take place on Monday morning, April 29th, before the conclusion of the last Session of the Congress, and that every delegate should be present to represent his own particular country.

Par. 124, on the Fingering for Violin. - The consideration of this paragraph was resumed from yesterday. It was agreed, after much discussion, to accept the text in general, but to modify the sign from 6-36 to 3 following the finger affected. The final sentence of the paragraph was altered accordingly, and it was agreed to add to Par. 45 the following works: "See exceptions in Pars. 47 and 124."

Arising from this, it was suggested and approved that the principle of "cross references" should be applied, were desirable, throughout the entire text.

Par. 126, on "Harmonics". - After lengthy discussion, all agreed to accept, provided that both signs follow the note, the second sign (for a diamond shaped note:- ◇) to be 16-13

Par. 128, on "Resultants" (written as small notes). It was agreed to change the sign in the 1st paragraph to 6-26 according to a previous decision on "small notes".

Par. 130, on inkprint copies of music for strings, over-
It was agreed to substitute the text of the key of the last ...
Revision.

Afternoon Session. 3:00 to 6:00 PM.

Mr. Raverat announced that he had, since the morning session, met a number of important French Press representatives, and arranged with them for a notice to appear concerning the Congress, and its raison d'estre, together with the full name and official designation of each of the delegates and of the Institutions represented.

GREGORIAN CHANT.

Mr. Raverat explained that the French had, for years, made

a special study of the application of Braille Music Notation to the ancient Plainchant, and that Mr. Adolphe Marty, Professor at l'Institution des Jeunes Aveugles (and also a distinguished church (*) organist in Paris) was a recognized authority on this special subject. He had many years ago prepared a Treatise (Vatican Method) which had received the approbation of the monks of Solesmes and of Dom Andre Mocquereau, than whom there were no higher authorities. Mr. Marty was also about to prepare a new and improved edition of his work. Mr. Raverat thereupon asked the delegates if they were prepared to leave this subject in his hands, as regards the text matter, and the many signs required. This was unanimously agreed to, especially as the subject affected French Church musicians perhaps more than those of any other country, and indeed was vital to them. It was considered that the Congress was fortunate in having the experience of so eminent a savant on so difficult and intricate a subject.

As Plainsong, however, was considered a specially important

the U.S.A.) for their inspection.

Music Publications in three different styles. (I) Bar-over-Bar. (2) Mr. Clavers' method. (3) Bar-by-Bar.

Mr. Raverat made a special announcement on behalf of the American Braille Press, viz;- that they were prepared to publish, under one cover, specimen pieces in each of the three styles mentioned above. This was in order to obtain a universal opinion on the comparative merits of each of the methods. Copies (any quantity) - when ready - would be supplied free of charge to the delegates present, for distribution to the Heads of the various Blind Schools and Insti-

(*) Organiste du Grand Orgue de St.Pierre-de-Montrouge.

tutions in their respective countries. Reasonable time was to be allowed for examination and mature judgment, and for reports to be received from the delegates.

It was felt by all present that it was a most magnanimous offer, and an assurance was tendered to Mr. Raverat that the copies would be "placed" with discrimination, in order to secure a definite expression of opinion from thos best qualified to judge.

In answer to a remark by Mr. Rodenberg on the costliness to the American Braille Press of so great an undertaking, Mr. Raverat waived it aside, insisting that the vital question was:- "progress along the right lines", and that the American Braille Press were willing, as a neutral body, to take this step solely in the interests of the musical education of the blind of every country.

The delegates were then asked to prepare, by Monday, a list of pieces suitable for transcription in each of the three styles(*) and Mr. Raverat undertook that each piece (three styles) should be

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Monday 29th April, 1929, (7th day)

Morning.

The delegates assembled at 9:30 at the Headquarters of the American Braille Press, 74 Rue Lauriston, Paris. The Italian delegates, had, however, to return to their country, and were therefore unable to take part, in person, in the proceedings.

Tribute to the Memory of Louis Braille

Mr. Raverat gave the opportunity for all present to inspect the beautiful bronze palm, with its inscription (also in bronze) which was to be affixed that day to the statue of Louis Braille at his birth-

place.

The entire party then proceeded, by motorcar, to the village of Coupvray (some 25 miles from Paris). They were joined by Mr. F. Grosjean-Maupin, Director of L'Institution des Jeunes Aveugles, Paris, and Lieut. L. Renaux, adjutant Secretary-General of that Institute. On arriving at the "Place Braille", in Coupvray, the party was received by the Mayor, Mr. Bouffault, who greeted them cordially and conducted them to the enclosure in which the statue of Louis Braille stood. The Mayor then read an address, in which he spoke of the appreciation felt by the inhabitants of the village of the honour done to the memory of their fellow citizen, and of the pride they felt in knowing that so great a benefactor to humanity had been born at that place.

Mr. Grosjean-Maupin then followed with an address, in which he voiced the sentiments which had actuated the Congress in asking the inhabitants of Coupvray to allow them to affix to the memorial a tribute which represented the feelings of every nation, and one which

The foreign delegates were then invited to say a few words. Mr. Rodenberg spoke for the American Foundation for the Blind, U.S.A., Herr Reuss for the German Institutions, and Mr. Watson for the National Institute for the Blind, England. At the close of the ceremony, the Mayor introduced to the party a member of the Braille family, which was deeply touched by the honour extended to his illustrious ancestor. The party was then conducted to the house in which Louis Braille was born, and Mr. Maverat asked the Mayor if he would, at a later date, accept a tablet (suitably inscribed) from the delegates of the countries represented, to be affixed to the cottage, indicating that the inventor of the universally adopted script for the blind was

born there, on the 4th of January 1809. In the name of the village, this offer was gratefully accepted by the Mayor.

The villagers evinced the keenest interest throughout the proceedings, and it was evident that the entire ceremony had touched them very deeply.

En route to Paris, the party was then entertained to lunch at Lagny by Mr. Raverat. At the conclusion, the delegates of each country took opportunity to express their appreciation of the work of the President of the Congress, who had, for two years, striven to make it possible to bring together the representatives of both hemispheres in order to arrive at decisions which would ensure unification of practice as regards Braille notation symbols all over the world. It was also a fact that he had travelled thousands of miles in Europe and America, and personally visited the experts of every country to secure their support. It was confessed that none but a neutral could have been successful as a "liaison officer" in such a case, and a preparation involved in making it at all possible to hold such a Conference of International representatives.

Mr. Raverat replied that the success which had crowned the week's deliberations was in itself a sufficient reward for anything he had been able to do, and he thanked the delegates for the right good will which had actuated one and all throughout the entire discussion.

On returning to the Headquarters of the American Braille Press, the business of the Congress was resumed:-

Afternoon Session:

Publication of Music in Various Styles for the purpose of comparison (See Minutes of 25th & 27th April)

Referring to the offer of the American Braille Press made on Thursday and Saturday, April 25th and 27th, Mr. Raverat consulted the delegates as to their views on the selection of the pieces most appropriate to the purpose. It was then arranged that the delegates of each country should send in a separate list of five pieces, in various grades, from which a final selection was to be made, after which Mr. Raverat would undertake to publish the same, as soon as possible, for distribution (through the delegates) as per the arrangement described in the minutes of the meeting of Saturday, April 27th.

A review of outstanding points which had remained over from former discussions was made, and in each case a final agreement was duly confirmed.

At 7:30 P.M., the President announced that the proceedings tion Musicale Braille" (the draft prepared by the French Commission which had formed the basis of the discussions of the Conference) were duly inserted in their respective and appropriate paragraphs. Also to ensure that the Minutes of the Conference (which had been entrusted to Mr. Watson, of the National Institute for the Blind, London) were carefully inspected and mutually confirmed.

As a final act, a solemn acknowledgement was made that, by the blessing of Almighty God, the work of the Congress had happily been crowned with success; and, that its deliberations having been governed by His Divine Spirit, we had all been enabled to conduct our

difficult and responsible task in harmony and with broadmindedness, each uniting in a common endeavour to dismiss prejudice and to understand each other's point of view, in the sole desire to secure that which should ultimately prove to be the true solution of the great problem before us, viz:- the unification, on a scientific and permanent basis, of the Braille music notation symbols for the use of the blind throughout the world.

(signed Edward Watson,
Secretary at the Congress.

A P P E N D I X

Tuesday, April 30th, 1929.

Meeting of special sub-committee delegated by the Congress, to confer with Mr. Raverat, President: (1) as to the arrangement of

PRESENT:

Mr. Raverat	President,
Mr.Rodenberg	U.S.A. delegate
Mr.Dupas	American Braille Press, Paris
Mr.Clavers	Institution des Jeunes Aveugles, Paris
Mr. Mayhew	National Institute for the Blind, London
Mr. Watson	" " " " " "

Morning Session 9:30 to 12:15 - Afternoon 2:30 to 6:00

At the request of the President, every paragraph of the "Notation Musical Braille" was reconsidered, in order to ensure that

the wording of all the amendments was correct in the text, and that the added matter was "placed" appropriately.

At the conclusion of this task, which occupied the entire day, the President announced that he would send a new copy of the "Notation Musicale Braille", incorporating all the amendments, etc., to each of the delegates of the Congress (each copy in the language of his own country) for scrutiny and revision, not only as to the actual text matter, but in respect of the idiomatic peculiarities of each language: French, English, German or Italian, as the case might be.

Mr. Raverat undertook to be responsible for (1) an alphabetically arranged Index to the work, and (2) an Index of Braille-Signs.

It was pointed out by Mr. Watson that the usefulness of the Text would be materially increased if each numbered paragraph were preceded by a short "heading" or Title. Mr. Raverat agreed that this should be done.

The Sub-Committee, at the suggestion of the President, dele-

Mr. Rodenberg and Mr. Mayhew drew attention to the fact that the present text contained nothing concerning song-writing, and Figured Bass.

Mr. Raverat said that the text re Figured Bass was in the hands of an acknowledged French expert, while the matter re song-writing was already being prepared under the supervision of Mr. Dupas. For some time, at this juncture, Mr. Dupas and Mr. Mayhew conferred, and it was eventually ascertained that the method was one in which all the delegates would probably agree.

The President stated that in due time the "Text" on these two subjects would be submitted, by post, to all the delegates, as well as that on Gregorian Chant (Plainsong) which had been entrusted to Mr. Marty, as per the Minutes of Saturday, April 27th, (afternoon session).

It was resolved that the account of this extra day's deliberations of the Sub-Committee should be recorded as an "Appendix" to the Minutes.

(signed) Edward Watson.

Secretary at the Congress.

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